

Abstract 561

TITLE: Methamphetamine and Other “Circuit Party” Drug Use Among MSM and MSM of Color: Implications for Prevention and Outreach.

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ISSUE: The use of methamphetamines and other “party” drugs (i.e., GHB, Ecstasy, Special K and Cocaine) now represents a significant risk factor for HIV infection and transmission among MSM populations throughout North America, including MSM of color.

SETTING: This community-based epidemiological/ethnographic study focused on MSM adults, currently living in the Western Washington State.

PROJECT: A National Institute on Drug Abuse supported project, the Substance Use Risk Exploration study is a communitybased study of methamphetamine and other “party” drug use in the Pacific Northwest. Methods included: review of extant epidemiological data; in-depth interviews with key informants (n=80), service/health care providers, and community gatekeepers; unobtrusive observations at community venues; and focus groups conducted with MSM. Key domains were identified through content and domain analyses, utilizing EZText.

RESULTS: Findings revealed multiple drug use by a majority of respondents, and drug use was linked to social and sexual networks. Subgroups reflected links regarding methamphetamine and other “circuit party” drug use. Internal dynamics included: identity meanings (including perspectives on “gay” identity); selfperceptions as a user; and meanings linked to sexual experiences while using. External dynamics included: initiation to methamphetamine and other drug use, and sexual activities associated with drug use. Key motivations for use included association with sexual and psychological arousal during sexual activities, and a perception that methamphetaminemediated depression and fatigue associated with HIV infection and treatment. Many respondents identified barriers to accessing and utilizing effective HIV and substance use treatment services.

LESSONS LEARNED: Within various groups of MSM, methamphetamine and other “party” drug use occurs within a matrix of social, ethnic, cultural, environmental and psychological factors. Patterns of use identified within these groups frequently cooccur with high-risk sexual behaviors. HIV prevention and treatment must be linked to substance use prevention, education and treatment. The development of effective and culturally competent HIV prevention and treatment strategies at individual, group and community levels must be a priority. These efforts need to acknowledge polysubstance use and unique cultural characteristics of MSM of color and to develop innovative ways to reduce risk.

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